HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PALM DESERT
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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KUEHNER, LOUIS

Interviewed by

Patricia Young

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INTERVIEWEE: LOUIS KUEHNER

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SUBJECT:

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TRANSCRIBER: Linda A. Jantzen

PY: This is an interview with Louis Kuehner for the Historical Society of Palm Desert Oral History Project at the Foundation for the Retired of the Desert on Chickery and Portola in Palm Desert. Today is January 25, Friday, 1980, and it's nine-twenty in the morning.

All right, let's start by talking about why you came here, when you came here to Palm Desert.

LK: Well, I originally came to the area, the desert area, at the recommendation of my sister who'd been coming to, as they said, the Springs, you know. And I'd just gotten out of the service. Had a whole bunch of money, a hundred dollars. (laughter) Military off pay. And I said, "Gee, I've got all that money. I think I'll go down there." So that's how I came, and I fell in love with the desert immediately. And I'm from the middle west, which there was such a contrast. I'd never seen

such beautiful, you know, dramatic mountains and all. It was just fantastic. So that's how I came and I was, of course, very young then. And I did the usual stint of bus boying and that type of thing. And then I had this opportunity to come to the Shadow Mountain Club as a lifeguard. And at that time they said, "Well, if you want to go way out to Palm Desert, you know, if you want to be stuck out there, why it's beautiful out there, but I don't know whether you really want to be stuck out there." So I came out and got stuck out here. (chuckle) And I started at Shadow Mountain as a lifeguard, and then found out, since my training had been in recreation and education, and I had done recreational work in St. Louis, I could see that there were a lot of things that would enhance the club activities there. And at that time Shadow Mountain Club was the hub of everything in Palm Desert, you know. There was nothing else here except Marian's Waffle Shop where everybody congregated, and Shadow Mountain Club. And so we just developed some programs first of all for the children. And we did all kinds of really fun things. I took them on hikes out into the desert, you know. We had, started little social groups for some of the young teenagers. We did parties

for them and we had dancing lessons and all kinds of things. And then around the pool, of course, we had extensive swimming instruction and we put on these very spectacular, I thought, sports shows, you know, where we pull in people from all over. I remember we had a lot of the olympic greats at that time. Vicky and Lyle Draves and some of the other people whom you probably don't even know. But at that time Vicky Draves had just, I think several years in a row, won the diving competition, gold medal. And every, I think one Sunday a month we would put on a big sports show. And, of course, that beautiful pool at Shadow Mountain. At that time we had the platforms, the diving platforms, and the slides and everything. So it was really quite interesting. We'd bring in judo shows. We'd bring in, oh, horseman shows, all kinds of things. The grounds, too, were a lot more extensive. And, of course, we had that little pond, too. So, I'm rambling on, but that's how I (laughter) I just got started at Shadow Mountain there.

PY: What year was this?

LK: I think it must have been fifty-three. I think that's when I got out of the service. And one thing just kind of led to the other, as far as my life is concerned with

the desert here. And I think once I established the Palm Desert, I had no desire to be in Palm Springs. Nothing against Palm Springs, but that was almost like the big city. And, of course, now Palm Desert is like the big city as well. But from there, then I got interested with and working with Hal Capp because I met him at the club and Chamber of Commerce. And they had their tiny little office on Highway lll there where, I think it's where Market Basket area is now. And it's kind of hard to remember where things were, you know. I'd love to see some of the old pictures sometimes and just kind of remind me where things were. Like the old post office that later turned into the old Crocodile Club or something. I don't know whether you've heard about all these things or not. But it would be fascinating to see some of those. Then they needed a part-time manager for the Chamber of Commerce. And, of course, I knew nothing about that kind of thing. But by this time, I guess I'd gotten to know quite a few of the people in the area here. So I thought that would be kind of fun to do. So I took that on, and under Hal's very able direction worked with him. Drove my little pink and white convertible around. And it said Palm Desert Chamber of Commerce. And, of course, had a fantastic tan the whole

time (laughter) so that here I was a walking advertisement for Palm Desert. Anytime I went out of the area, why, you know, with my car and tan, the whole bit, why that was it. (laughter) It was a lot of fun. And I think, you know, the whole area, of course, you knew everybody then. And nothing ever remains the same, of course, but it really was fun because you did . . . but it was a very small town. And, of course, we had a lot of open space which is beautiful. We hadn't gotten into the big building crush in the walled city yet. So there was a lot of feeling of open air and space. And with the Chamber of Commerce, then I got interested, I could see that there was a need for other kinds of recreational activities and cultural activities. And this is, remember, before the college came up. So then I started a place called Leisure Loft, which we were attempting to pull together classes and all things of leisure-time activities. And we started in the old Desert Magazine building, which is now Geronimo's. And I moved from there, I don't know what the progression was anymore, but we were on this big ranch in Palm Desert, which now is being developed into condos, right across from Rancho Palmiras Estates. I don't know whether you're familiar

with that.

PY: What road?

LK: Well, it didn't have any name. Just past Cook Road, past VanNess and that area. And it's on the north side. And there was a, I think it was, twenty-seven acre ranch that had a huge, beautiful, adobe-type home. And the living room was just, tile floor, and you could practically walk in the fireplace, it was that big. And the hallways, the hallway, long tiled hallway, had built-in bookshelves all hand carved. They were just beautiful, and I wonder what happened to those. Had two bedrooms with corner fireplaces and huge dressing room-bathroom. I just felt elegant, you know. I was renting this place. I just driving around one day and I found it. And it was going to ruin, you know. So I found out who owned it and I called them. I said, "Don't you want to rent this so the property doesn't just get so rundown?" And he agreed to. And I couldn't anymore afford the rent. I could, you know, buy a place at the time, but I felt that this was it anyway. And it really became a showplace, once I got in there and started clipping things. The vegetation was so beautiful. It had been planted beautifully. There was the main house. There was a guest house. There was a help's quarters, and huge metal storage area, and

I utilized all those for classes. I had a nursery school and the guest house. That was a little two-bedroom, two-bath home. It just looked like a little gingerbread cottage. It had crepe myrtle trees around it and all kinds of . . . And the help house was the piano studio, music studio. I had two baby grands in there and a little old lady who taught piano. And I always thought of something like Hansel and Gretel, you know. (laughter) She was kind of the little witch in there. (laughter) With her piano. She wasn't a witch at all. She was a very nice lady, but she was, she had to be a hundred, I think. And she did a beautiful job of teaching piano. But anyway, we had classes and a lot of the creative arts, dance, great books discussion groups, classes in various languages, French and Spanish. And I would just pull teachers as I heard about them in the area. I would say, "Hey, how would you like to teach a class, and we'll work it on a percentage basis." That way, I didn't have to put out any money and it would be an incentive for them to build up their class. So there was really a great need for this kind of thing, precollege days, you know. And I guess at one point we had as many as twenty-five different classes going on there. And

they all had recreational programs for the kids. And we had, you know, such a neat area because we had all this desert, and we had date groves. And we could cook out and hike and do nature activities, all kinds of things. And the approach to the place. There was just this single dirt road, and I think half of the fun of it was for people getting stuck. And it was a one-way thing, you know. And we gave these big parties. We had a buffalo barbecue one time where I had buffalo meat imported from, I can't even remember where. Some place in Colorado, I guess. And a couple of us stayed up all night, gathering mesquite and digging a big pit, and getting fires going. And cooking the barbecue. And then we had about three hundred people for a buffalo barbecue. We did different theme parties like that, you know, because there were a group of young people that were very interested in getting together. And mostly young married couples with some single. Some of them had been involved with the Shadow Mountain Club and were still somewhat involved there. But they weren't doing as many party things down there. So anyway, it was a lot of fun. And I guess , the Leisure Loft then evolved into more of the things that we could really make a living off of,

particularly when the college came in. We could see they were really going to be taking over the creative, the classes and things. So we stuck with the summer camp and the nursery school as the two major things that I could do, too, where I didn't have to pay anybody else. So then we've relocated a couple of times and we finally ended up buying property in Rancho Mirage. An acre there with a little house. And we developed, I think, a really fine nursery school that had a country-like atmosphere. We had all kinds of animals. We had chickens and ducks and goats and peacocks and everything, you know. And big trees, and we'd go out and cook out with some of the little four- and five-year-old kids and take them on hikes in the wash. At that time the washes were really washes. They were beautiful, you know, with natural vegetation. And the animals and all, it was really exciting. So we sold that just a few years back when I became very heavily involved with the foundation. I'm kind of rambling. Now is there, am I going the wrong direction for you?

PY: No, it's fantastic. Is it still in existence today?

LK: Yes. It's called Leisure Loft, and evidently doing very well.

PY: And they have the same camp and nursery school?

LK: Well, no, they don't have the camp anymore. They never did. They bought the business as a nursery school, and the property as well. And I'm not, you know, naturally everybody has a little different approach to things, so I doubt that they get into the areas that we did because I was particularly interested in doing more things like that with animals and the camp things and that sort of thing. Because it also led into, we did a day camp, in which we had about fifty or sixty kids in the summer-time. So the nursery school fit into our day camp program as the kids got older. And then we did a residential camp up in the mountains, and I did trip camps. So this all led in, you know, we had some of these kids all their lives, poor kid. (laughter) But we'd take them on trips to, you know, I did Grand Canyon many times. I'd always take small groups, probably no more than eight. I'd take them in a van, and we would do all of our own cooking and stuff. I took them down to Mexico, Puerto Vallarta. Took them to Hawaii, Canada. This is the way I got to travel. As I think about it now, I think, my God, I must have been crazy to be responsible for those kids, you know.

But at the time, I just loved it. And I didn't, it wasn't that much of a thing, you know. As you get older, I think you think, oh, this could have happened and that could have happened. And we never did have any problems. So I think you worry needlessly. The more you know about it, the more you worry, and that's ridiculous, you know. So anyway, it was fun. And then I got into the foundation here. And I got into that because I'd done this camp for their . . . They asked me . . . I was doing various kinds of camps in addition to my camps for "normal kids." (cleared throat) Excuse me. (cough) And I did a camp for the emotionally disturbed. At that time there was a Warner Guidance Clinic in Palm Springs. And then the foundation approach means that, how would you like to do a camp with retarded children and non-retarded children, and do an integrated camp? And, of course, that intrigued me. So we did, and it went very well. And there were so many benefits for both groups of children. So it came time to evaluate the camp at the close of, the woman who was the executive director of the agency at the time, who'd just been here a short time, said that she was planning to move back to Virginia and get out of the field entirely. And would I like her

job. (laughter) Then I laughed, just like I did now. And I said, "Oh, Helen, don't be ridiculous. I'm not trained for this." And I went home and talked about it with my wife and I said, "You know, it really is intriguing. Maybe it would be exciting just to kind of try it for awhile." So I said I would try it since I was in a position where I had the nursery school going and I could more or less run that at the same time because I had enough staff there. And so I tried it and I haven't stopped because it's been a very fast-growing organization, very dynamic, and working with these people is just, oh, nothing you can believe. It's very rewarding and the job itself is, you go in a lot of different directions which is kind of suited to my personality. I think I'm a little schizo, you know. I like doing all kinds of things, you know. And at the time I started, they had just bought this property here in Palm Desert. And I think they had five hundred dollars, and they put five hundred dollars down. Cliff Henderson owned the property. And they bargained with Cliff and he was very generous about it. And they were buying it for eighty thousand dollars. Then they came up with another donation of five thousand, which they promptly gave him. And so

we had the facility here. And we started it, that was in 1969. Now the foundation itself was organized in 1959 in Palm Springs by a group of parents and interested people. And they gradually moved to Palm Desert because they wanted to be more centrally located. And they realized that Palm Desert was going to be the hub of the whole desert, and they felt this would be the best place to be. So we started with just a work activity program. And we had five students, and there were, by the end of the year I guess, there were four of us on the staff, and we started with a twenty thousand dollar budget, I think. And then it grew. We started with the adult program, which is now our FETCH Center. And FETCH, by the way, stands for the Foundation for Educating, Training and Counseling the Handicapped. We have an acronym for everything we do around here. You know, just alphabet soup. So that was our first program. And since then we've gone into many programs. But a lot of people have associated the word FETCH with the foundation, thinking it's synonymous. And, of course, it's not. Fetch is just one of our programs. We have ALP, Apartment Living Project. We have an apartment house in Palm Springs in which we're training borderline retarded people to live independently. And place them in their own

apartments out in the community. And that's another exciting program. We have DIAP, Desert Infant Awareness Program in which we're working with twenty-five infants and their families in their homes. It's an Outreach program. And we found this is very exciting (buzzer) because this is a program where we're reaching them very early. Can we turn this off for a minute?

PY: What was here before the foundation appropriated this property? (table or something rumbling)

LK: I don't think it was ever used for anything but a church. And it may have just been empty for a short time before the other church moved over here. I don't really know what that . . . I'm terrible on (more rumbling) most dates and things.

PY: I just wanted you to tell them, you know, that this had been the community church.

LK: Oh, okay. I'm sorry.

PY: That's what I was getting at.

LK: Are we on now?

PY: Yes, in a round about way.

LK: Oh. (laughter) Yes, well, I'm not sure when the Palm Desert Community Church was built, but it had been here . . .

I know I arrived around fifty-three and it had been here several years. And it's just been the church the whole time. Eisenhower's church, of course. You know that's where a lot of publicity was taken. He would come to church here all the time. He and Mayme. So . . . I don't know what else to say about the church.

PY: That's fine.

LK: As you can see, I was not a frequent church visitor. (laughter)

PY: We sort of were cut off when you were talking about the foundation. I don't know if you've finished.

LK: Well, I don't know how interested you are in, you know, but every time I get a chance, I put in a plug for all the programs we're doing which is not of historical value, I'm sure. Except I, you know, it is growing so fast and it's an important part of the community. Is, you know, providing for handicapped people. And, of course, I think more and more people are more aware of this, and that's what our job is, to help to make them more aware of the importance of people regardless of, you know, their human worth is there regardless of what some of their abilities are. You know, I like to talk of it in terms of abilities rather than disabilities

because these people have a lot of abilities. But we have just started a group home here in Palm Desert in which you may have heard all kinds of unfavorable publicity about because the people on the street tried to petition us off the street. That's just about a block away from here. And, but it is mainly because they didn't really understand. And I think we'll win them over in time. I think they were thinking that we had mentally ill people who were apt to go off on rages and ravage everyone (laughter) in the neighborhood, you know. And I think a lot of people still don't know the difference between mental retardation and mental illness. Sure, some of them have emotional problems just like some of us do, but anyway. We're going more and more into the community with our people. We're going to develop more group homes in the area. And the idea being not to have them all on one spot, not to have "sort of a funny farm some place which is, people refer to it. But to have them integrated into the community. And by that, the very fact that they are integrated into the community, they will become more like the community, too. And it's just amazing, you know. People tend to take on some of the characteristics of the people they're around,

given the opportunity. So that's our pitch for the foundation. (laughter)

PY: In terms of the Leisure Loft, did you find that you were getting people outside of Palm Desert?

LK: Oh, yes. Yes, we got them from Palm Springs and Indio and even as far as, you know, Mecca, Thermal. But, it really did, the grounds of the place, people would bring visitors out from, people they having coming from the east coast and all because it really had a charm. I can't describe it. Well, there were so many old beautiful trees. And as I say the planting, somebody had planted it because it had been the old Warner Ranch. And I don't know that much about it except that occasionally people would come up and say, I remember, I used to live here and work for the Warners when there was a ranch, you know. And it just had a feeling of the old desert, but you were off away from everything. I felt like I was a prince or something, you know. Here I was starving to death because I wasn't making any money. But it's a little easier to starve when you're a bachelor, you know, you don't have a family to worry about. And it was a very exciting time for me, and I think for a lot of people, too, because it was a unique kind of operation. People,

as I say, they felt they could bring people out any time whether they were involved in a class or not, you know. And it was almost like their arrangements. You know, a lot of the people were very close friends, you know. And they were very anxious to see it go and they had [illegible] young children. They wanted things for their kids to do, as well as for themselves to do. And it was just, I think, very necessary at the time for the community. I remember starting it. I, you know, I'd done all this dreaming, as all of us do when we have a project, and I'd jotted down things and I decided to call a community meeting. And Cliff Henderson came to that meeting. And here was I, you know, some little pip-squeak in the community calling a community meeting. I had about a hundred people at the meeting. I couldn't believe it. But there was that much interest. That was the reason, you see. And I was telling them about the kinds of plans and how are we going to do this, finance and this and that. And different ways of financing didn't come across, so I just finally decided I'd try it on my own. And just start with what we had. And that's kind of how the foundation has grown, too. You see a need and you figure out a way to do it. And I remember there were two

people who were, well, three people who were extremely instrumental in helping me getting . . . Hal Capp being one of them. Very, very helpful because he's such a positive person. And Marge McCartney. I don't know whether you've met the McCarthneys, but they've been here a long while. And Olga Payne, who had Beso Mi Mucho Restaurant. And she's another lady that figured in the early days. But they all said, you know, if you have an idea that you think is sound, you can make it work even if you don't have the money, you know. And I thought, oh, wow, this is ~~very~~ far out (laughter) And then, of course, I had people who said, well, now if you start a business, you never can expect it to do anything until you're at least three years old, blah, blah, blah. So I ignored the business people, people who made money, and I took the advice of the people who really believed in an idea. And it probably wasn't really all that successful financially. It wouldn't have been considered, but it was really successful, I think, as far as serving the need at the time. And one of the needs being mine. (laughter) I mean, after all, that's why you do anything in the first place, you know. So, anyway, it was really kind of a shame to see them bulldoze all that property

and tear down all the beautiful trees. There were beautiful cottonwood trees, all the crepe myrtles. That's progress. We can go into something else now.

PY: Is that where Desert Horizons Country Club is going in?

LK: I guess generally speaking. I kind of lost track of what's going in, you know. The property right next to us, I don't know whether you were here before they tore down this beautiful Mexican-style home which you could see from the highway that was . . .

PY: That's what I'm thinking of. That's the Desert Horizons.

LK: Well, that was right next to us. And we went down a little road that was adjacent to their property, skinny little road. And there were palm trees and an entrance, and I guess the road was at least a block from the main highway. You could just see down this skinny little road, and it wound around this, this house was up on a knoll. And in the back there was a huge reservoir which we used as a swimming pool. And there was the most beautiful panorama of the desert. You could just sit out. There was like a little porch from the living room there. And on either side there were citrus trees. And you'd just grab an orange or an apple, a lemon or a lime or something like that. And you'd just have your

little swim, just beautiful. The view of the mountains and the desert, and there was just nothing in front then, you see. But now, of course, you wouldn't see a thing. (laughter)

PY: I think we've covered everything I have down here. Is there anything else that you can think of?

LK: I can't . . . No, I think, you're probably getting a lot of people who are telling a lot about Shadow Mountain Club, are you now?

PY: Well, perhaps we could talk a little about that because your impressions of it, of course, are going to be different.

LK: Well, I guess I came in at a time when they had had a very successful time with their parties and things. But there wasn't all that much for the, it was called a family club, but there wasn't that much organized, you know. And they were going through changes and types of membership and directors and things of that sort which is the typical thing for country club. But we really did a lot with getting families doing things together. We formed one group for the parents called the NTOS. And we called them Not Too Old Set, here we go with the acronyms again. (laughter) And we would throw a theme party and we had a committee. We did a lot with committees.

And we'd get these women to come and volunteer and make decorations for this and that, and plan the party. So there was a lot of involvement. There wasn't just things being done for them. And yet, you know, they were members of the club, and I was the staff, but they loved to get together and work on these things. And I guess mainly one of the reasons is my background was always getting people to work on things together because of my recreational and social work background. That's what you do, you know. You go into a community and get people working on something. And so we just used the same approach, and they loved it. And there were a lot of, you know, spectacular parties. Our luau each year was quite something out of a storybook because we used, it was all tied around that big figure eight pool. At the time there were Conyas on either side of the pool where there are condos now. And we would thatch all of those roofs, and we'd thatch that platform, the diving platform, and the slide, everything. It looked like a little polynesian village there. And we put a stage across the center of the pool there where the little circle and the big circle meet. And that's where we had the entertainment. And we, I would get various things.

I remember one time we flew in gardenias from from Mexico. And we had the pool just loaded with gardenias, you know. That was just magnificent. And candles on styrofoam things floating. And then we had the huge buffet up on the top of the clubhouse part, on the terrace there. And we'd have the pig and the whole bit, you know. And it was really, we had at least six hundred people at those things. So it was quite a party. (laughter) There were, here again, there was a need for a community center type thing. And Shadow Mountain was kind of serving that purpose because there was nothing else in the community organized. So people would come up there for, well, we'd have special barbecues and all kind of tennis events which would end up with a party, maybe for the family. They had a big movie screen out on the grounds, huge, and we'd show movies I think once a week, particularly during the summertime there. And so we were open in the summer, part of the summer, and we would do programs there. And we had boats in the lake, and all these ducks and things. And we'd do the usual parties at Christmas and Easter, you know, for the kids. Easter egg hunts, Santa Claus, and the whole thing. And then we would do special shows,

like we had Queen for a Night when Jack Bailey's Queen for a Night was running. And we'd have Jack Bailey down, you know. Well, Cliff Henderson was, you know, very active with a lot of theatrical people. And there were a lot. And the desert was so small that a lot of the celebrities still came down to get away from people, you know. So they would naturally come to Shadow Mountain because here again that was the tourist site. People always wanted to see the beautiful pool and the grounds. And it really was beautiful because here again we had more of the expanse, you know. So a lot of very famous people would come by just to, you know, walk around the pool. You'd run across, can't even think who some of them were, but at the time they were popular people. In not only the film industry, but the aerospace and that sort of thing. Because Cliff, of course, was very into the whole airplane business, I think. (laughter) And military people because Patton, you know, I guess you got the deal about Patton's training grounds here and all that sort of thing. I don't know all that information except that some of Shadow Mountain Club's property was used to be the barracks for the training, and I lived in some of those for Shadow Mountain when I worked for Shadow Mountain, they would give housing to some of us.

So we lived in some of the barracks which was kind of fun. You know, it was over in, it's hard to know what was where. Where the Flying J Gas Station is. There were stables there, and then I guess just this side there were a group of barracks, buildings. That was our own little commune over there. All the staff people.

PY: You mentioned a lake; where was that? That there were ducks and boats on it.

LK: Yes, right on the Shadow Mountain grounds. You know where the two-story little, I guess they have it now. It's like a little dinner restaurant upstairs, and down below there's a little, where the restrooms and sauna and this overlooks like down by the tennis courts. And just in back of there where there are condos now and the hotel rooms are. There was a big lake or pond there. And we drove in, and the first thing we saw to your left was this little lake. It was big enough, you know, that you could go out in the boats and quite something.

PY: When you set up the Chamber of Commerce, what was it doing in the showing? I mean where was its success and how was it functioning in the community?

LK: Well, I remember one thing we did. We put a fun fair because I remember going around with these silly hats

and selling them to people. And we had a committee going that would decorate these hats in all sorts of outlandish ways. And then had a fun fair. And it was an annual event where we got together just to get people in the community together, you know. That was the main thing, and to get some feeling of esprit de corps among the citizens. So we would do this annual fun fair. I can't even remember, it must have been summertime when all the tourists were not around. And the idea was to, of course, promote Palm Desert. I remember working on some ideas for billboards. I must have been out of my mind because I really hate billboards. (laughter) But we worked with Foster and Kleiser Company and designed some billboards as you would approach the turnoff into Palm Springs. There were some billboards there advertising Palm Desert. And one of the big ideas, of course, was to get people thinking about Palm Desert rather than Palm Springs. And, of course, we're still having that problem. A lot of people still refer to this area as Palm Springs, which I'm not so sure is all that bad in the long run, you know. People do know about Palm Desert now. But you just say, well, that's around the Palm Springs area, you know. But it was promoting

to get people down here and to get businesses down here. I remember Hal Capp saying, "You know, this whole Highway 111 is going to be like, what's the in the San Fernando Valley down there, Ventura Boulevard." He said it's going to be like that. Just going to be one shop after the other. And I said, I couldn't believe it, you know. He said from Palm Springs to Indio it's going to be solid. And Palm Desert is going to be the hub. And he's really a very foresighted individual. He could see all this happening. And we had a lot of volunteers who would come in and we'd have the little brochures. The people would stop by the Chamber of Commerce to get information out, and so we had our little brochure with kinds of things they could do in the area, you know. So it was interesting. Very quaint. I can't think of anything else that has gotten beyond that, but I know it has because I don't know hardly anybody here anymore, you know. I still see some of our old cronies, and I guess I still hang on to that feeling that we had. I remember when we moved here, the big thing was that Desert Aire, you know. That was the gathering spot even before Shadow Mountain. And, of course, Shadow Mountain was built when I got here, but I could hear people, I

heard stories about how Desert Aire was, and then of course we would always go over to Desert Aire.

PY: What was that like?

LK: It was a little hotel where people could land their private planes. And they'd have an annual luau, too, which was the loudest thing you've ever gone to. (laughter) And it did, it had a little bar and a little dining room, and units that you could stay in. And it was a lot of fun. I hated to see that torn down, you know. That's for the Marriott Hotel now. But here again, everybody knew everybody, and they'd all meet at Desert Aire, you know. And, of course, where Sunshine Meat, Fish and Liquor is, that was fun. What was that called?

PY: Angelo's?

LK: Angelo's, yes. It was another little corner place. And a little fireplace there. And you'd go in and have a drink and sit around the fireplace. Just like a little pub almost. Reminded me of some of the European pubs, you know. And then Mary Ann's Waffle Shop. Have they talked about that?

PY: I've heard one person that . . .

LK: Oh, she was, her typical line was, you know, thank you, and have a good day. And, you know, she would have, here again, the people would come into the area. There wasn't hardly anyplace you could go to get anything to eat, and

she had delicious waffles. It was a tiny little place. It's where the used furniture store is.

PY: Second hand.

KL: Yes. And it was just tiny, and she lived in the back. And, you know, you never knew whether you were going to walk into Rock Hudson or, you know, Alice Faye or whoever, because everybody came there. And she was such a character because she was so outspoken. And a little theatrical looking herself, you know. She appealed to a lot, they came in just to talk with her. There was just a little counter here, and maybe one or two tables. And you just had to wait until, I think she had one waffle iron. Excuse me. Everybody had to kind of wait. Of course, everything else was slower, too. You didn't care, you know. Just kind of go in there and spend a couple of hours, you know. And I was trying to think of the other place. Well, of course, Firecliff Lodge there eventually, that was also a gathering place. It sounds like all I did was go out and drink and eat. But that's not quite true. (laughter) Of course, you do a little more of that, I guess, when you're a bachelor. But, you know, at that time, why Palm Springs, you had, there were two places, the Dollhouse and the Palm House, and the Palm

House is now the English Lion's Grill. And the Dollhouse, of course, is Sosintinas But they've just built where the Dollhouse was. But that was really hysterical, that dollhouse. Have you had anybody talk about that?

PY: No.

LK: That was in Palm Desert. Just in passing, but that was the big pickup place, you see, for the singles. And they always had, well, the Guadalajara Trio is still around the desert, those who are left. They used to have the Guadalajara group there and their Latin American music. And we were all into Latin American dancing, of course. It was a tiny little place and it had a little shop with all these dolls. And these sexy-looking gals would go around carrying all these dolls and selling them for fabulous prices. The more drinks you had, why the more dolls you had. (laughter) So that's why it was the Dollhouse. But you could not on a weekend, you really, it was packed solid. I don't know how they got by with it. I mean, literally to get through, you had to grope your way through. (laughter) Everybody got to know everybody real well. (laughter) And at the end of the season they would close for the summer at the end of the season. They would just take and empty all the bottles.

They had one night where they got rid of all the booze that was left over. So you were drinking everything under the sun. They would just empty all the bottles. It was free, you know. (laughter) It was just a kick. (laughter)

PY: You mentioned one thing. Did people tend to leave in the summers in the fifties?

LK: Yes. A lot of people did. Those of us who were left really loved it because there weren't many people around, you know. And a lot of the businesses, well, there weren't that many businesses to begin with. A lot of the businesses in Palm Springs closed down. It was very quiet to walk up and down Palm Canyon then. You felt like you had it back again. You had the town back to yourself again.

PY: Well, did families tend to leave, or did they stay around?

LK: Well, families that could afford it would go to the beach at least for a couple of weeks or a month. And there were a lot of summer bachelors where the husbands would get their families out of the desert just to give them a little bit of a vacation. And maybe go see them on weekends or something. They had to keep working. So

their families could go to the beaches, you know. So here again you had a comradery that developed, some of them. Those who stuck it out in the summer. (laughter) So it was fun. There's such a danger, though, in living in the past, isn't there? You've got to keep moving. I think it's just, you know, we've got a couple of young people on our staff, and occasionally I'll meet. Like this one young man who works with me, Ted Hoe. And we'll go and maybe have a drink because usually we can't meet during the day, we're so busy here. But we'll have a drink and have a staff meeting, and I'll run into somebody from the past. And that will bring up all kinds of reminiscing, and he really loves it. You know, some young people really do enjoy hearing about the past. My daughter's the same way. She loves old things, and she loves getting into all that. I guess you like it, to a degree, too.

PY: Obviously.

LK: (laughter) Well . . .

PY: Okay.

LK: Sorry to . . .

END OF INTERVIEW